

Today's News - Wednesday, August 20, 2014

- ArcSpace brings us Meyer's travel guide to Hong Kong, "the most breathtaking skyline in the world - unique in its ambition, elegance, ruthlessness, density and cosmopolitan aura."
- A slew of Scottish practitioners have signed on with Architects for Yes, a pro-independence campaign launching tomorrow.
- Betsky bristles at the "evil of banality" of bad design in the continuing "starchitecture" debate: "We, as a society in general, and those commissioning do not want to spend that money. That is the root of all this evil, not egotism."
- Curbed's Schellenbaum takes a swat at architecture, "largely a discipline that sits on stilts, away from the floodlands of the people that use it in everyday life," and those who "have started to shake the pillars architecture sits on" (she calls out a lot of big names, but calling Ban a "guy" who won the Pritzker without naming him is a bit much - and comments are brutal).
- Three projects by Gehry, Hadid, and Nouvel "have stoked serious debate about what architecture means beyond the building envelope."
- Hine has issues with Gehry's plans for the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and warns not to be taken in by his "great model that is itself thrilling - because its beauty as an artifact encourages us to ignore the possible shortcomings of the vision it represents" (the Forum is "artless in every sense").
- Some are wondering why so many new housing projects in L.A.'s burgeoning Downtown are "squandering a chance to be beautiful" (high-end kitchens are more valuable than curb appeal).
- On brighter news notes: Q&A with Lehrer re: what makes a successful park and how L.A. can build them: the city needs "an uber-urban guru" (and she loves palm trees).
- Profiles of 9 women who "are an inspiring presence" in public interest design - and being recognized for it.
- O'Toole reports from Durban, South Africa, where German architects teamed with local craftsmen to build a shelter for hitchhikers made out of scrapped cars that "resembles a five-lane traffic jam. Peculiar as it is, the structure is entirely practical."
- Goldberger goes totally gaga for Gehry's Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris: it is "muscular and delicate, utilitarian and fantastic," and "an utterly spectacular building."
- Moonan is moved by the "sensitive restoration and renovation" of the Clark Art Institute's original building: "What's great is that, while the interior may feel historic, it's not. It's all Selldorf."
- Wright says Birkerts got everything right with his National Library of Latvia in Riga: "Embodying myth, physically anticipating the future, and creating wonder, this extraordinary building is timeless."
- Thomas Phifer tapped for Warsaw's Museum of Modern Art and the TR Warszawa Theater complex.
- Davidson makes an FLW pilgrimage "to a series of idiosyncratic extravaganzas that remain astounding - this processional of Midwestern masterpieces reminds us that great architecture is not always the most sensible solution, or the most frugal, or the sturdiest. Sometimes it's brilliantly insane."
- Amelar, meanwhile, reports on the "rebirth" of FLW's Hollyhock House, where "many long-vanished features will be revived, and sparkling" - and it's almost ready for its close-up on Hollywood Boulevard.
- Good news from Moscow: Shukhov Tower "gets a reprieve from circling developers," though "if they don't allocate money for saving it, sooner or later it will die."
- Renovation of the Melnikov House is underway (bad news: residents evicted, "the latest twist in an ongoing legal dispute over ownership").
- Not so good news for Hinkin's Greenwich Sainsbury's eco-store: English Heritage concludes it is "not of sufficient importance as a pioneer of, or turning point for, sustainable retail architecture" to warrant listing (then what, pray tell, would be?!?).
- Ending on a high note: AIA ABI and ASLA 2014 Business Quarterly surveys show business is looking bright(er) for both architects and landscape architects (ABI is at a 7-year high!).

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Travel guide: Hong Kong: ...the most breathtaking skyline in the world...unique - in its ambition, elegance, ruthlessness, density and cosmopolitan aura...home to more skyscrapers than any other city in the world. By Ulf Meyer -- I.M. Pei; How Wai Pun; Bruce Murdoch (1846); Foster + Partners; Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF); Cesar Pelli; Rocco Design; Paul Rudolph/Wong & Ouyang; Anthony Ng; Terry Farrell; Harry Seidler; Daniel Libeskind; Coldefy & Associates; Hung Yip Chan; Tod Williams Billie Tsien; etc. [images]

Scottish architects launch yes campaign: A new campaign group of pro-independence architects is set to launch tomorrow: More than 50 architects...have signed up to a manifesto for independence issued by the campaign group Architects for Yes...believes independence holds 'huge opportunities' for architects. -- Dualchas; 3DReid; Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands; Cre8 Architecture; Malcolm Fraser; GRAS; Alan Dunlop- The Architects' Journal (UK)

Architecture's Evil of Banality and How to Fight It: Bad design is sucking the life out of our human-made environment: That is the point I have been trying to make in the wake of Peggy Deamer's resurrection of the "starchitecture" debate...We, as a society in general, and those commissioning do not want to spend that money. That is the root of all this evil, not egotism. By Aaron Betsky- Architect Magazine

Hey architects, the future of architecture is not about you: Architecture is largely a discipline that sits on stilts, away from the floodlands of the people that use it in everyday life...people have started to shake the pillars architecture sits on...architecture is changing in a way that prioritizes the fulfillment of the community over the fulfillment of the individual...the rudimentary over the sophisticated. And, well, hallelujah for that. By Amy Schellenbaum/Curbed- The Verge

3 Controversial Architecture Projects Changing the Conversation: Mirvish + Gehry's Toronto condo complex, Zaha Hadid's recently awarded cultural centre in Baku, Azerbaijan, and the Islamic museum by Jean Nouvel proposed for Lower Manhattan...have stoked serious debate about what architecture means beyond the building envelope.- Azure magazine (Canada)

Don't forget the whisper: "Making a Classic Modern: Frank Gehry's Master Plan for the Philadelphia Museum of Art"...The great model that slices the museum and its proposed additions is itself thrilling, and perhaps dangerous, too, because its beauty as an artifact encourages us to ignore the possible shortcomings of the vision it represents...artless in every sense. By Thomas Hine- Philadelphia Inquirer

Why Are So Many of Downtown's New Housing Complexes So 'Ugly'? Some observers call the just-opened or in-the-pipeline apartment and condominium complexes "generic"...or more colorful phrases...the message is uniform: Downtown is squandering a chance to be beautiful. Plenty of factors are at work..."The sad truth of the matter is that curb appeal has limited value in terms of rent"...- Los Angeles Downtown News (LA Downtown News)

Mia Lehrer on what makes a successful park, and how L.A. can build them: You asked Mayor Garcetti to appoint a design

czar..."L.A. needs somebody really strong who cares about design...an uber-urban guru." - Los Angeles Times

9 Women Who Are Rocking Public Interest Design: Women are an inspiring presence in this sector of design and, in another trend that contrasts tradition, they are being recognized for it. -- Emily Pilloton/Project H Design; Julia King; Erin McGurn/SCALEAfrica; Ceara O'Leary/Enterprise Rose Fellow, Detroit Collaborative Design Center; Liz Ogbu; Marika Shioiri-Clark/MASS Design Group/SOSHL Studio; Emilie Taylor/Tulane City Center; Chelina Odbert/Kounkuey Design Initiative; Deanna Van Buren/FOURM Design Studio [images, links]- Architizer

Scrapheap challenge: Durban's shelter for hitchhikers is made out of used cars: Local craftsmen and German architects create useful landmark to raise awareness of the South African city's transport issues..."Rush Hour"...an unusual gazebo-like structure...resembles a five-lane traffic jam. Peculiar as it is, the structure is entirely practical... By Sean O'Toole -- Goethe-Institut; raumlabor - Guardian (UK)

Gehry's Paris Coup: Despite its echoes of Paris's architectural past, Frank Gehry's latest museum project—the Fondation Louis Vuitton, opening this fall in the Bois de Boulogne—is like nothing the city has seen before: muscular and delicate, utilitarian and fantastic, a marriage of cultural ambition and private enterprise...an utterly spectacular building... By Paul Goldberger -- Bernard Arnault/LVMH [images]- Vanity Fair

A Classic Remastered: Annabelle Selldorf's sensitive restoration and renovation of the Clark Art Institute in Massachusetts intensifies its original aura: ...now, as soon as you enter the first gallery, you are immersed in the museum's Old World atmosphere. What's great is that, while the interior may feel historic, it's not. It's all Selldorf. By Wendy Moonan -- Tadao Ando; Daniel Deverell Perry (1955); Cooper Robertson; Selldorf Architects with Gensler [slide show]- Architectural Record

Motown to mountain: Gunnar Birkerts's new National Library of Latvia [in Riga]: ...one of America's greatest post-war architects, transformed modernism with metaphor and materiality. Now aged 89, he has realised an extraordinary glass mountain in the land of his birth...Embodying myth, physically anticipating the future, and creating wonder, this extraordinary building is timeless. By Herbert Wright [images]- DesignCurial / Blueprint Magazine (UK)

Warsaw's Museum of Modern Art Selects Thomas Phifer and Partners for Arts Complex: The New York-based firm will design a new cultural center to house both the museum and the TR Warszawa Theater on Delifad Square...will also develop conceptual designs for the park area immediately surrounding the complex. [images]- Architect Magazine

In Praise of Frank Lloyd Wright's Midwestern Design Virtues: ...I made a pilgrimage to a series of idiosyncratic extravaganzas that remain astounding more than 50 years after the death of their creator...this processional of midwestern masterpieces reminds us that great architecture is not always the most sensible solution, or the most frugal, or the sturdiest. Sometimes it's brilliantly insane. By Justin Davidson- New York Magazine

A Rebirth for Wright's First L.A. Project: Clues to Hollyhock House's past have since emerged. When it re-opens to the public this fall, many long-vanished features will be revived, and sparkling. By Sarah Amelar -- Lloyd Wright; Rudolph Schindler; Griswold Conservation Associates [images]- Architectural Record

Moscow's Shukhov Tower gets reprieve from circling developers: Soviet-era communications tower, whose latticed steel beams influenced London's Gherkin, granted protected status by city..."drafting documents to preserve buildings ... is not a guarantee they will be saved. If they don't allocate money for saving [the] tower, sooner or later it will die." -- Vladimir Shukhov (1922)- Guardian (UK)

Residents of Melnikov House evicted as renovations get underway: ...the latest twist in an ongoing legal dispute over ownership of...an iconic yet dilapidated vestige of avant-garde architecture in Moscow...to be renovated and turned into a museum. -- Konstantin Melnikov [image, video]- The Calvert Journal (UK)

Stirling-shortlisted supermarket listing bid rejected: News that the listing bid made to save the Greenwich Sainsbury's eco-store has failed follows the death of its architect Paul Hinkin...English Heritage concluded that the building...is "not of sufficient importance as a pioneer of, or turning point for, sustainable retail architecture." -- Chetwoods- The Architects' Journal (UK)

Architecture Billings Index (ABI) Reaches Highest Score in Seven Years: AIA chief economist Kermit Baker attributes the boost in design activity in part to the institutional sector which is finally strengthening after more than five years of suffering....Business is also looking bright for landscape architecture firms, according to the American Society of Landscape Architects' second quarter 2014 Business Quarterly survey...- Architect Magazine

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